

**LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm
on 12 APRIL 2017**

Present: Councillor R Chambers (Chairman)
Councillors G Barker, J Davey, E Hicks, S Morris and G Sell.

Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), M Chamberlain (Enforcement Officer), T Cobden (Principal Environmental Health Officer), J Jones (Licensing Officer) and E Smith (Solicitor).

Also Present: Barry Drinkwater and Doug Perry (representing ULODA).

LIC58

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Public statements were made to the meeting as follows:

1. Doug Perry as President of ULODA
2. Barry Drinkwater as Chairman of ULODA

The statements are appended to these minutes.

In response to statements by Doug Perry and Barry Drinkwater, the Chairman said that the Scrutiny Committee had agreed that the issues presented by ULODA did not need to go before Cabinet. The department was looking at more efficient processes for dealing with licensing, and better ways of communicating with taxi organisations. Taxi Chat had been released and looked good. Consultation should carry on between drivers and officers, but it was up to the Council to decide policy. The department and the committee have an excellent relationship with the taxi trade, but times have moved on and the department and the committee must always do what is best for the public.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer said that a review of licensing and enforcement was being undertaken. There was no intention of disengaging from consultation with the taxi trade, but it was only the beginning of the review process. A critical friend had been identified to provide feedback. Taxi Chat had been released, and he supported ULODA's idea for a website, although the Council had a similar idea planned. The possibility of looking at statistics relating to specific problems and specific taxi organisations was interesting, and there was a possibility that the department could do some work on this.

Doug Perry thanked both the Chairman and Principal Environmental Health Officer for their positive comments. He said ULODA had a vast amount of knowledge to be used, and that the trade's main fear was that it would have no remit for consultation.

The Chairman said the Council intended to have a full and productive consultation, and that he hoped it would be helpful to both sides.

LIC59 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Anjum.

LIC60 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings held on 23 and 25 January and 24 March were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

LIC61 **REVIEW OF GAMBLING ACT POLICY**

The Licensing Officer said that the revised policy contained minor changes only. A consultancy period had taken place, with letters and emails inviting feedback sent to a range of people and organisations. No written responses had been received.

RESOLVED to approve the proposed amendments to the policy and recommend to Council that the amended policy be adopted.

LIC62 **ENFORCEMENT**

The Enforcement Officer presented the report.

Councillor Sell asked in what cases licenses were immediately suspended for reasons of public safety, and whether there were fewer cases going to court because of changing licensing procedures.

The Chairman said that immediate suspension occurred in serious cases, such as when a driver had committed an act of violence. He added that the committee was in no way softening its approach, and that it took public safety very seriously.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer said that the department intended to review its approach to enforcement. One option was to introduce a graduated scale depending on the seriousness of the offence. The department would like to be more pro-active, but this would depend on resources. This issue would form a part of the licensing review.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS MADE AT THE LICENSING MEETING ON 12 APRIL 2017

PUBLIC STATEMENT from Doug Perry, Honorary President, ULODA

Both my Chairman and I addressed Cabinet at its last meeting and we were well received.

We were given a number of positive replies and observations in response to our questions. I propose now to mention just a few of them.

The deputy Leader made a very pertinent statement as to the reforming of the Taxi forums which will be implemented.

The Leader was concerned and questions were raised with the CEO as to why Time Factors had been allowed to pass, with no action being seemingly taken.

A lot of consideration was given to working in partnership for the good of all, an example of which is the new process to check the Right to Work. Although a resounding success from the trade's point of view, there has been no feedback from the Council about how well it is working. There is surprisingly no feedback on the latest issue of Taxi Chat, late again. However I must congratulate the officers and Licensing Department for its presentation and content.

The Council and Trade must work together in Partnership.

The Trade is united and although it brings in many Millions of pounds into the Uttlesford economy many operators are still being ignored or not consulted. Why is this?

My final points are that a number of drivers are appearing or about to, before the Committee. It should not be taken out of proportion as the number involved is less than ONE PER CENT of registered Drivers. That the intelligence services use the Trade for the gathering of intelligence as does the Police.

So why does UDC continue to procrastinate and fail to take advantage. This seems to be less than respectful.

Lastly ULODA is launching its website in the very near future and would like to have a link into UDC Licensing to refer certain matters. I know that we will have your approval.

I am going to pass over to my Chairman to expand further and put meat on the bones.

Doug PERRY
Hon President

PUBLIC STATEMENT from Barry Drinkwater

Good evening from me too, Barry Drinkwater, Chairman of ULODA on and off (mainly on) since 2004, new members may like to know. We are the trade association of choice for the taxi and private hire trade and have been addressing the committee since before Doug was its Chairman (Eric Hicks will also remember us too as the trade's voice of reason when he was LEHC Chairman).

Just a quick recap. The minutes of your last meeting on 25 January refer to our joint presentation with Robert Sinnott, Managing Director of Acme Transport (one of our largest operators who used to be on ULODA's executive committee - until that is his business became his sole focus of attention with its acquisition of NCS, Newport Contract Services) and Murray Hardy, your previous Licensing Officer now retired and employed as Consultant with the 24x7 Group, Andy Mahoney's company with its extensive schools contracts division and the official taxi service provider at Stansted Airport since the BAA days. We are, as Doug said, united, we speak with a single, rational voice on behalf of the trade as we have done together, on this same platform, since 2008.

Robert and Andy send their apologies and are sorry they can't be with us this evening. Andy has asked to be placed on record his sincere thanks to the Licensing Team for going the extra mile last month to issue licences for over 250 private hire vehicles. Thank you very much, Mr Cobden (and Jo Jones - nice to see you this evening).

Doug and I spoke (in church!) to Cabinet on 30 March about Scrutiny's Enforcement Task Group, which reported its findings in September following the trade's extensive involvement in its work over six months in 2016. Cabinet discussed Scrutiny's report on 12 January and resolved to implement several recommendations. We were disappointed that four of these (including one which supported new enforcement policies for licensing, taxis and private hire operators) were approved WITHOUT a timed schedule for implementation, after Scrutiny had stipulated "before April 2017". Scrutiny's final recommendation on taxi forums was referred to this committee and we are patiently awaiting the next stage - a question we asked at your January meeting, Chairman, when you chose not to comment..... The Deputy Leader's positive words to us in public on 30 March were heavenly music to our ears!

Cllr Dean, Chair of Scrutiny, has now asked the council's Scrutiny Officers to investigate "the actions that have been implemented and those that have not", to quote from his email to me. His offer to "follow this through as soon as possible" has prompted the inevitable question "by when, please?" That was 10 days ago and we await his response....

Finally, your agenda has its usual regular item on Enforcement Activity since your last meeting. We note that 73 cases understood to be related to the trade are currently ongoing. It will be interesting to know of any trends worthy of our attention - are the cases primarily drivers failing to notify (FTNs), which Tony Cobden says in the new issue of Taxi Chat out today is the vast majority of offences. Our analysis has quantified this at a virtually unchanging 70% over several years. Also, are there any notable operator trends where we may help with their education?

Thank you, Chairman and members. Have a good meeting, which we will be of interest to us all.